

The Impact of Disclosure upon Vote Choice

Research Thesis

Presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for graduation
with research distinction in Political Science in the undergraduate
colleges of The Ohio State University

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April 2017

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Abstract

Since the landmark case Citizens United v. FEC (2010), the topic of money in politics has been highly salient. While Justice Kennedy's holding in it is firmly against campaign finance regulation, he appears to leave the door open to disclosure laws. While campaign finance reform has been widely discussed from legal and policy standpoints, little research has been conducted on the impact that these disclosure laws have on voters. This study focuses on the potential impact that a disclosure system can have on how voters measure a candidate's trustworthiness. By using a random sample of potential voters in Columbus, Ohio and Irvine, CA, I conducted an experimental survey. First, respondents were asked a timed questionnaire to gauge their political knowledge. Subsequently, respondents watched an ad advocating for a fictional city council candidate. Respondents were then randomly assigned to one of three groups in which they were told that the ad was paid for by "Americans for Liberal Action", "Americans for Conservative Action", or "Americans for Action". Respondents were then asked questions about how they perceived the candidate, and the likelihood of voting for him. Finally, respondents were asked specific demographic questions. I hypothesize that potential voters can and do draw political cues when disclosed the name of an advocacy organization that supports a candidate. Specifically, when the advocacy organization gives an ideological cue that is similar to the beliefs the potential voter, he or she will be likelier to support the candidate than if they are not given that cue, or if they are given a cue that contradicts their beliefs. I find that across subgroups, respondents are in fact more likely to vote for the candidate when he is supported by the non-ideological cue.

Introduction

On October 14, 2015, CNN hosted the first Democratic Presidential Debate. Within their opening remarks, Senator Bernie Sanders (I-VT) and former Senator Jim Webb (D-VA) directly addressed the issue of excessive money within the political spectrum. Senator Webb commented, "People are disgusted with the way that money has corrupted our political process, intimidating incumbents and empowering Wall Street every day, the turnstile government that we see, and also the power of the financial sector in both parties". Similarly, Senator Sanders stated, "As a result of this disastrous Citizens United Supreme Court decision, our campaign finance system is corrupt and is undermining American democracy. Millionaires and billionaires are pouring unbelievable sums of money into the political process in order to

fund super PACs and to elect candidates who represent their interests, not the interests of working people.”¹

On the other side of the political spectrum, now President Donald Trump also commented on excessive money within the political spectrum. Trump declared “I will tell you that our system is broken. I gave to many people. Before this, before two months ago, I was a businessman. I give to everybody. When they call, I give. And you know what? When I need something from them, two years later, three years later, I call them. They are there for me. And that's a broken system.”²

As exemplified by these quotes, the salience of the issue of money in politics has increased. Truly, since the days of Watergate, people have held a closer eye on the effect that money plays on the political process. While the issue went to the back of many voters’ minds in the years afterwards, it was brought back after the *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission* case in 2010. A June 2015 New York Times/ CBS News Poll showed that 66% of people thought that “the wealthy have more of a chance to influence the elections process than other Americans”.³⁴ Similar polls⁵ have shown the salience of this issue- many on both the left and the right of the American spectrum seem to agree that there is an exorbitant amount

¹ "The CNN Democratic Debate Transcript, Annotated." Washington Post. The Washington Post, 13 Oct. 2015. Web. 02 Nov. 2015.

² "Prokop, Andrew." Donald Trump Made One Shockingly Insightful Comment during the First GOP Debate." Vox. Vox Media, 06 Aug. 2015. Web. 10 Dec. 2015. <<http://www.vox.com/2015/8/6/9114565/donald-trump-debate-money>>.

³ http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2015/06/02/us/politics/money-in-politics-poll.html?_r=0

⁴ While Democrats were more likely than Republicans to say yes to the above statement, a majority of respondents in both parties agreed on the above statement.

⁵ https://mayday.us/new-presidential-poll/?utm_source=mayday&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=20150930

of money within the political system. They are right- campaign committee spending, outside expenditures, and dark money spending have all greatly increased.

History of US Campaign Finance Laws

To truly get a sense of the issues and intricacies behind the campaign finance system of the United States, we must first look at its history. The foundation of campaign finance regulations in this country predates even thought of a revolution from Great Britain as a possible or practical option. After George Washington lost his first election to the Virginia House of Burgesses in 1755, he edited his strategy by entertaining voters in a polling booth nearby. Washington provided “a barrel of punch, 35 gal. of wine, 43 gal. of strong cider and dinner for his friends”, which cost him about 39 pounds and 6 shillings.⁶ Washington’s tactic worked, and he was easily elected to the Virginia House. However, his colleagues in the new legislature quickly passed a law preventing candidates from giving prospective voters “money, meat, drink, entertainment or provision or ... any present, gift, reward or entertainment etc. in order to be elected.” Thus, campaign finance laws and regulation began even before our country was founded. Although the laws enacted by the Burgesses were by no means sweeping, monumental, or even necessarily relevant today; they are highly symbolic of the culture and thought process of the founding fathers.

While campaign finance reform has had a complicated history since Washington’s encounter with the Burgesses, the modern age of campaign finance regulation did not begin until after Nixon’s Watergate scandal in 1972. In 1974, Congress passed multiple Amendments

⁶ Campaign Cash Degrades Discussion of Issues- AARP Bulletin: <http://www.aarp.org/politics-society/government-elections/info-04-2012/campaign-cash-key-issues.html>

to the Federal Election Campaign Act of 1971, legislation constructed before the momentous Watergate scandal in 1972. These amendments included limits on expenditures by candidates, limits on contributions to candidates, limits on independent expenditures, a creation of a Federal Election Commission (FEC), direct appointment of FEC commissioners, and others. However, in 1976, the Court struck down many of these in the holding of *Buckley v. Valeo* (1976) including the limits on expenditures by candidates who did not accept public funding, the limits on independent expenditures, and the shared appointment system which Congress and the President appointed FEC commissioners (the court found this in violation of separation of powers). These provisions were struck down mainly upon First Amendment violations, and was described as the court as follows:

"The Act's contribution and expenditure limitations operate in an area of the most fundamental First Amendment activities. Discussion of public issues and debate on the qualifications of candidates are integral to the operation of the system of government established by our Constitution. The First Amendment affords the broadest protection to such political expression in order 'to assure (the) unfettered interchange of ideas for the bringing about of political and social changes desired by the people.'"⁷⁸

From then until the early 2000s, a few key events occurred. In 1990, the United States Supreme Court held in a 6-3 decision that the Michigan Campaign Finance Act was not a

⁷ BUCKLEY v. VALEO 424 U.S. 1 (1976) U.S. Supreme Court Decided January 30, 1976

⁸ In my opinion, it is important to note the importance of *Buckley*. It is this case that truly began the "special words" doctrine. For instance, corporations and unions, both which had strong previous bans, were allowed to still influence elections- they simply could not use the word "elect". Future magic words laws with superPACs and 501(c)s would be enacted and have rampant effect after 2007 with *FEC v. Wisconsin Right to Life, Inc.*, where SuperPACs had the power to influence elections, so long they didn't use the words "vote for", "elect", "support", "cast your ballot for", "Smith for Congress", "vote against", "defeat", "reject" or so on.

violation of the First Amendment under *Austin v. Michigan Chamber of Commerce*. In the holding, Justice Thurgood Marshall stated, "This restriction serves the compelling state interest of eliminating the coercive effects of the political marketplace of great amounts of wealth that are accountable to the income of the corporate report."⁹ The act had prohibited corporations from using "general treasury funds for, inter alia, independent expenditures in connection with state candidate elections".¹⁰ Furthermore, in 1992, President George H.W. Bush vetoed the Senate Elections Ethics Act of 1991, which, among other things, would have amended the FECA to include a provision that would provide partial public financing for congressional candidates. In his veto statement, President Bush claimed that "Our nation needs campaign finance laws that place the interests of individual citizens and political parties above special interests and that provide a level playing field between challengers and incumbents. What we do not need is a taxpayer-financed incumbent protection plan."¹¹

However, in 2002, a rather monumental change happened. The McCain-Feingold Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act (BCRA) was passed. While it was eventually signed into law, President George W. Bush expressed multiple concerns upon signing¹², including a concern for a restriction of individual freedom, as well as lack of strength on protection for union members and shareholders. BCRA created a limit on the increased role of "soft money", or non-FEC regulated money. After the 1979 FECA amendments, the FEC allowed the use of soft money for

⁹ *Austin v. Michigan Chamber of Commerce*. (n.d.). Oyez. Retrieved December 6, 2015, from <https://www.oyez.org/cases/1989/88-1569>

¹⁰ "Austin V. Michigan Chamber of Commerce." Legal Information Institute. Cornell Law School, n.d. Web. 06 Dec. 2015. <https://www.law.cornell.edu/background/campaign_finance/88-1569.html>.

¹¹ "Bush Rejects Campaign Finance Legislation." CQ Almanac, n.d. Web. 6 Dec. 2015. <<https://library.cqpress.com/cqalmanac/document.php?id=cqal92-1106995#65>>.

¹² "George W. Bush: Statement on Signing the Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act of 2002: <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=64503>

“party building activity”. As this term was never explicitly defined under *Buckley*, ads could be run for the purpose of educating voters- known as issue advocacy ads. So long as any organization did not state one of the eight magic words- “vote for”, “elect”, “support”, “‘Smith’ for Congress”, “vote against”, “defeat”, or “reject”, the ad did not have to be subject to a hard money regulation. Soft money was a useful tool for both parties and candidates to bypass the previous FECA limitations on elections contributions. BCRA’s attempt to close this loophole was not perfect, however; 501(c) organizations (tax exempt non-profits) and 527 organizations (Super PACs/Political Interest Groups) were exempt from any sort of soft money ban. However, while 527s were not given any sort of spending limits, they were required to register with the IRS and file “‘periodic’ reports of contributions and expenditures. Those committees that raised or spent \$50,000 a year (or expect to) are required to use the IRS' electronic filing system, while other committees can file on paper.”¹³

BCRA’s regulatory power, however, would not remain unchecked for long. In 2003, the California Democratic Party, National Rifle Association, American Civil Liberties Union, and individuals such as Senator Mitch McConnell filed a joint lawsuit against the Federal Election Commission, arguing that the regulations enacted were unconstitutional and were a violation of the First Amendment. In *McConnell v. Federal Election Commission (2003)*, the court specifically looked at the soft money ban as a possible violation of the 1st Amendment. However, in a 5-4 decision, the Court upheld most provisions of BCRA, stating that since the regulation was on soft money, which had less of a statement of “political values”, the government had a

¹³ "527s - Frequently Asked Questions." Center for Public Integrity. N.p., 21 Nov. 2005. Web. 02 Nov. 2015. <<http://www.publicintegrity.org/2005/11/21/5541/527s-frequently-asked-questions#5>>.

legitimate interest in regulating it as a form of possible corruption. In the majority opinion, Justice O'Connor and Stevens wrote that "money, like water, will always find an outlet".¹⁴

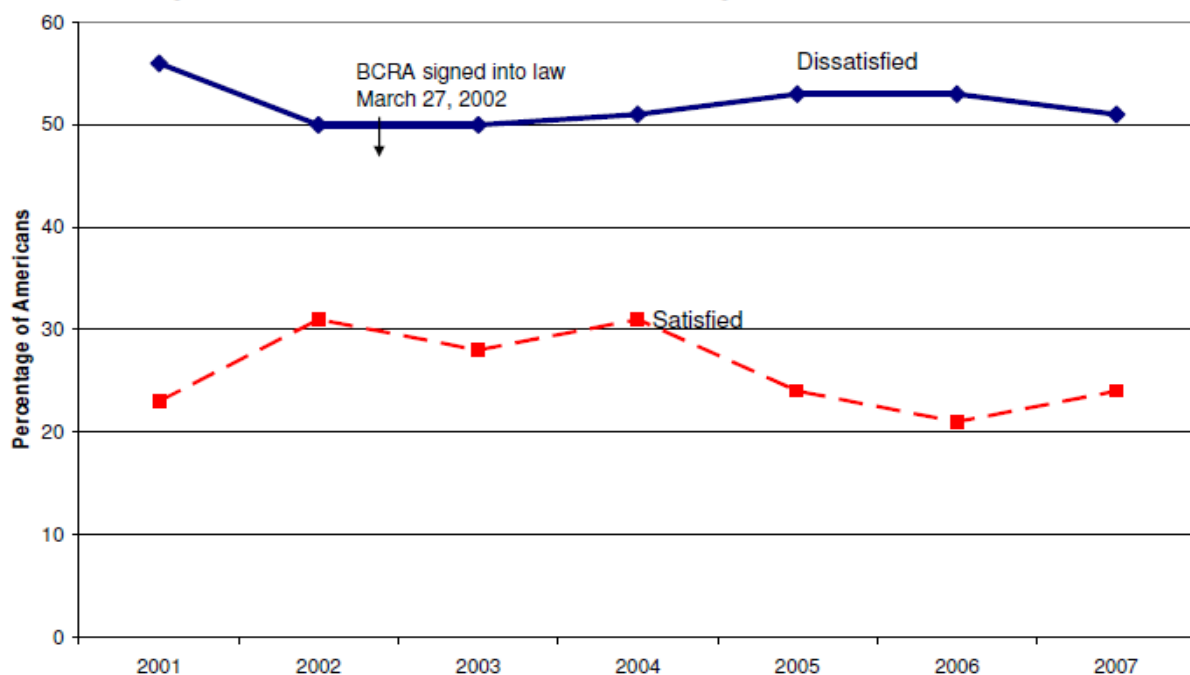
While *McConnell v. FEC* did uphold most of BCRA, the case represents an important shift in the courts mentality- they were once again likely to accept hearing cases about campaign finance laws. In 2006, a Vermont campaign finance law that placed a cap on financial donations made to individuals was struck down as a violation of the first amendment. In *Randal v. Sorrell*, the Supreme Court determined that Vermont's campaign contribution limits of 200/400 dollars were unconstitutionally low, claiming that the limits were "disproportionate to the public purposes they were enacted to advance". While the court acknowledged that some limits are constitutional, "danger signs", such as the one in the Vermont Law, could hinder candidates from properly being able to campaign.¹⁵ While it dealt with a single state law, *Randal* is important as it was the first case that the Supreme Court has struck down a contribution limit as unconstitutionally low.

Interestingly enough, opinion polls show that BCRA did not seem to improve public trust and attitudes about money in politics. In fact, when Americans were asked by Gallup Poll about the state of the nation's campaign finance laws, dissatisfaction actually slightly rose after BCRA was signed. Two reasons explain this slight bump in dissatisfaction. One was that despite its intent and arguably good faith effort, BCRA did not end impact of soft money- it simply diverted money to 527 (tax exempt groups) as well as 501(c) (interest groups which do not have to

¹⁴ *McConnell v. Federal Election Commission*. N.p., n.d. Web. 02 Nov. 2015. <http://www.oyez.org/cases/2000-2009/2003/2003_02_1674>.

¹⁵ *Randall v. Sorrell* <http://www.oyez.org/cases/2000-2009/2005/2005_04_1528>

disclose their donors so long as federal campaign activity is not their main purpose). The fact that campaign cues towards voters did not decrease post-BCRA, such as campaign advertisements and other electioneering materials, would explain why there was not sudden satisfaction in the system. Additionally, LaRaja notes that, “Americans do not pay attention to the workings of the campaign finance system, and they certainly cannot distinguish between scandals involving soft money versus bundlers”.¹⁶ This is a vital point- although most Americans polled could tell that something was ‘wrong’ with the system, many could not differentiate between the intricacies of campaign finance regulations.



Data from Gallup Poll, various years, "Americans Access the State of the Nation."

The most controversial campaign finance reform case of our time happened in 2010. By early 2008, the conservative non-profit organization Citizens United, which stated that its

¹⁶ LaRaja, Raymond J "From Bad to Worse," *The Forum* 6 (2008): Issue 1, Article 2

mission was to “reassert the traditional American values of limited government, freedom of enterprise, strong families, and national sovereignty and security”¹⁷, produced a movie highly critical of then Senator Hillary Clinton. Known as *Hillary: The Movie*, it was scheduled to be offered as video-on-demand on Direct TV right before many of the Democratic primary elections in January 2008. As a preventive measure, Citizens United then filed a lawsuit arguing that the “ban on corporate electioneering communications and the laws disclosure and disclaimer requirements was unconstitutional as applied to *Hillary: The Movie* and its three ads”. In *Citizens United v. FEC (2010)*, the Supreme Court held that independent expenditures by corporation’s and labor union’s treasury PACs were protected by the First Amendment. This invalidated the various provisions of BCRA that restricted independent expenditures within the last 20 days of an election. A few months later, federal judges applied the case to *Speechnow.org v. FEC*, deciding that unlimited independent expenditures were valid. Both *Speechnow* and *Citizens United* opened the door for the creation of superPACs.

Citizen United had immediate pushback. Many powerful government officials have openly criticized the Supreme Court decision. House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi stated that the decision “represents a step backward for the American people and our nation’s political process.” Senator John McCain (R-AZ), coauthor of BCRA, claimed that it was “the most misguided, naïve, uninformed, egregious decision of the United States Supreme Court, I think, in the twenty-first century.”¹⁸ Senator John Kerry went a step further, stating “I think we need a constitutional amendment to make it clear once and for all that corporations do not have the

¹⁷ Coyle, Marcia. *The Roberts Court: The Struggle for the Constitution*. N.p.: n.p., n.d. Print.

¹⁸ *Id.* at 16

same free speech rights as individuals.”¹⁹ Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg has openly stated ““If there was one decision I would overrule,” Ginsburg told The New Republic, it would be Citizens United....I think the notion that we have all the democracy that money can buy strays so far from what our democracy is supposed to be”²⁰

Although the current era of Campaign Finance is predominantly characterized by the *Citizens United* case, one important case has also shaped the lens at which to look at the system- *McCutcheon v. FEC* (2014). *McCutcheon* held that two year aggregate campaign contribution limits were unconstitutional under the First Amendment.²¹ Prior to this decision, individuals were prohibited from donating more than \$48,600 combined to all federal candidates, and prohibited from donating more than \$74,600 combined to all parties and federal candidates. However, the Supreme Court decided to uphold the “base” contribution limits, meaning that the maximum one individual can donate to a single candidate is still \$2,600 (plus a cost of living adjustment) per single election.²² While the majority did keep this provision in place, Justice Clarence Thomas’ concurrence noted that he believed that *Buckley v. Valeo* should be overturned, and that BCRA and all campaign contribution limits should be subject to stricter scrutiny. This may foreshadow a future direction that some justices on the court may want to approach future campaign finance regulation and limits. For the time being, it appears that the Supreme Court has slowed down on hearing cases about campaign finance. The Court

¹⁹ "Quotes by Members of Congress on Citizens United." PFAW. <<http://www.pfaw.org/issues/fair-and-just-courts/quotes-members-of-congress-citizens-united>>.

²⁰ Alman, Ashley. "Ruth Bader Ginsburg: Citizens United Was The Current Supreme Court's Worst Ruling." The Huffington Post. TheHuffingtonPost.com, 28 Sept. 2014. Web. 02 Nov. 2015. <http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/09/28/ruth-bader-ginsburg-citizens-united_n_5897760.html>.

²¹ *McCutcheon v. FEC* <https://www.oyez.org/cases/2013/12-536>

²² <http://www.fec.gov/pages/brochures/contriblimits.shtml>

denied hearing *Iowa Right to Life Committee v. Tooker*, a case which would have looked at state bans on corporate contributions.²³

Thus, campaign finance regulations since the passage of the FECA has drastically changed. However, there are a couple of key takeaways from examining the modern history of campaign finance laws. For one, the practical options that reformers have are very clearly different from what they had even just ten years ago. Many reformers are shifting away from advocating for caps on contribution limits as well as caps on individual spending (aside from those who push for the quixotic attempt at amending the Constitution), as the Supreme Court very clearly seems to be taking a hard line against it. Additionally, while “matching fund” programs appear to be another practical option for reformers, even those programs appear to be under attack by the court. In *Arizona Free Enterprise Fund et al. v Bennett et al.* (2011), the Court struck down Arizona’s system of providing additional funding to publicly funded candidates when they faced opponents or opposition groups with big money.²⁴ While reformers can take solace that the Court stated “we do not today call into question the wisdom of public financing as a means of funding political candidacy”, effective public financing systems like the one in Arizona have definitely been weakened by the holding of this case. However, although the court ended up striking down parts of BCRA and the FECA in *Citizens United*, it is important to note that the Court ultimately left the door open to disclosure. Ironically, *Citizens United* strengthened the legality for Congress to pass effective disclosure laws. In his opinion,

²³ "Search - Supreme Court of the United States." Supreme Court of the United States. N.p., n.d. Web. 02 Nov. 2015. <<http://www.supremecourt.gov/Search.aspx?FileName=%2Fdocketfiles%2F13-407.htm>>.

²⁴ ARIZONA FREE ENTERPRISE CLUB’S FREEDOM CLUB PAC ET AL. v. BENNETT, SECRETARY OF STATE OF ARIZONA, ET AL. Supreme Court. 27 June 2011. Print.

Justice Kennedy comments, “With the advent of the Internet, prompt disclosure of expenditures can provide shareholders and citizens with the information needed to hold corporations and elected officials accountable for their positions and supporters. Shareholders can determine whether their corporation’s political speech advances the corporation’s interest in making profits, and citizens can see whether elected officials are “‘in the pocket’ of so-called moneyed interests.”²⁵ Thus, disclosure remains one of, if not the, strongest weapon that democratic reformers can potentially utilize today.

Voter Behavior

In *Citizens United*, it appears that the majority of the Supreme Court base part of their decision upon a rational-actor model of voting behavior, such as Popkin’s *reasoning voter*, where voters “use premises to make inferences from their observations of the world around them”. For instance, in Chief Justice Robert’s concurrence, he notes that “Legislatures remain free in their incorporation and tax laws to condition the types of activity in which corporations may engage, including electioneering activity, on specific disclosure requirements or on prior express approval by shareholders or members.” However, what the majority fails to account for is that there are other ways that citizens vote upon. Popkin discusses the idea of *low-information rationality*, where voters combine “learning and information from past experiences, daily life, the media, and political campaigns”.²⁶ This framework discusses that voting “is not like buying a television set” but is more like investing “in future benefits to be derived from the government”. Essentially, Kennedy alludes to the fact that voting is simply like

²⁵ "Citizens United v. Federal Election Comm'n 558 U.S. ____ (2010)." Justia Law. N.p., n.d. Web. 02 Apr. 2016.

²⁶ Popkin, Samuel L. *The Reasoning Voter: Communication and Persuasion in Presidential Campaigns*. Chicago: U of Chicago, 2008. Print.

a rational economic decision, and donor disclosure can provide useful information, similar to reading a prospectus before investing in a mutual fund.

Political scientists have long studied the way that voters identify and apply certain cues when they do not have enough information to make a fully calculated, “rational” decision. These cues can range from signaling to a specific political party (partisanship), signaling to a particular ideology, factors about one’s appearance (such as ethnicity or age), support or opposition from various groups, or likelihood of winning (viability). Simply put, these cues can act as heuristics, or mental shortcuts and rules, which assist voters in making their decisions on complicated issues, or on issues which they may not have complete knowledge about. Heuristics are examples of “system 1” processes, which “operate automatically and quickly, with little or no effort and no sense of voluntary control”. Alternatively, “system 2” processes require “attention to effortful mental activities that demand it, including complex computations. The operations of system 2 are often associated with the subjective experience of agency, choice, and concentration”.²⁷ Both of these systems draw upon the idea that humans have a finite amount of cognitive capacity, or a limited amount of energy to spend on complicated mental tasks. If that energy becomes depleted, humans revert to using their “system 1” processes. Most researchers agree that this sort of dualistic thinking occurs when analyzing voting behavior. For instance, Lupia describes it as the difference between “encyclopedic” vs “information shortcuts”.²⁸ Similarly, Rahn contrasts the two styles as

²⁷ Kahneman, Daniel (2011-10-25). *Thinking, Fast and Slow* (p. 20). Macmillan. Print.

²⁸ Lupia, Arthur. “Shortcuts Versus Encyclopedias: Information and Voting Behavior in California Insurance Reform Elections.” *The American Political Science Review*, vol. 88, no. 1, 1994, pp. 63–76., www.jstor.org/stable/2944882.

heuristic and “theory-driven” vs “data-driven”.²⁹ While whether heuristic use is beneficial or detrimental is debatable, most voters do utilize them in some way to assist with voting.

Popkin also discusses the idea of voters “projecting” their beliefs on candidates. “When voters identify what parties are candidates, they are giving them the benefit of the doubt. When they assume that the positions they favor are the ones their party or candidate will take, or when they assume that their favorite candidates position is acceptable, they are projecting on the basis of past information much the same way that an investor in stocks projects future earnings from past corporate performance, or assumes that a company whose new president has a record of successes will improve under his leadership”.

This idea of projection is tied to the idea of trust- when a shareholder is doubtful or does not trust a CEO’s leadership or judgement, he or she will likely move their money out of the company. This idea of trust has many different definitions- some define trust as “the degree to which people *perceive* that government is producing outcomes consistent with expectations” which emphasizes the term “perception”, for “people’s view of government is far different than its actual performance would predict”.³⁰ Aday notes that, “when political trust is relatively high, people will be likely to see a federal role in helping minorities, the poor, and foreign nations, even though most will not actually benefit directly from such policies; when trust is relatively low, that support disappears”.³¹ Simply put, when things are going well, people will trust

²⁹ Rahn, Wendy M. “The Role of Partisan Stereotypes in Information Processing about Political Candidates.” American Journal of Political Science, vol. 37, no. 2, 1993, pp. 472–496., www.jstor.org/stable/2111381.

³⁰ Hetherington, Marc J. Why Trust Matters: Declining Political Trust and the Demise of American Liberalism. Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 2005. Pp. 9-10 Print.

³¹ Aday, Sean. "Why Trust Matters: Declining Political Trust and the Demise of American Liberalism." Public Opinion Quarterly. 69.2 (2005). Pp. 330 Print.

government actors. When things are going badly, people will not. A similar model includes Retrospective Voting, in which voters continuously evaluate the performance of current party with power, and use this evaluation of past performance in order effectively make an evaluation of a future performance.³² This model can simply be summed up by the fact “citizens are not fools” and that citizens “pass judgements on the leaders, not policies”. Theoretically, political disclosure reports can change how much or how little a voter trusts or makes a judgement upon a politician. If disclosure information is given to the voter that shows fundraising activity from sources that are contrary to a voter’s beliefs, this can decrease the voters trust in the candidate. Conversely, if they receive information that shows fundraising activity from sources that are synonymous with the voter’s beliefs, this can increase the voter’s trust in the candidate.

Additionally, Levi and Stoker’s provide a definition for trust that appears to be all-encompassing.

“Although trust is a contested term, there appears to be some minimal consensus about its meaning. Trust is relational; it involves an individual making herself vulnerable to another individual, group, or institution that has the capacity to do her harm or to betray her. Trust is seldom unconditional; it is given to specific individuals or institutions over specific domains. For instance, citizens may entrust their lives to their government during wartime but not trust the bureaucracies that expend funds during peacetime...Trust judgments are expected to inspire courses of action.”³³

This definition gives a good overview of what trust is accepted to be. It is typically a concept that humans perceive to be relative (you can trust to a certain degree), a concept that

³² Fiorina, Morris P. *Retrospective Voting in American National Elections*. New Haven: Yale UP, 1981. Print.

³³ Levi, Margaret, and Laura Stoker. "POLITICAL TRUST AND TRUSTWORTHINESS." *Annual Review of Political Science* 3 (2000): pp. 476. Web.

involves vulnerability (you are potentially sacrificing security when trusting), and a concept that is relational (trust being an integral factor of the relationship).

Broadly speaking, the notion of an endorsement heuristic applies to many situations in everyday life. For instance, while the clear majority of people agree the earth revolves around the sun, few know the exact astronomical calculations that lead to that conclusion. While the clear majority of people agree upon the fact that smoking causes cancer, fewer can articulate the specific damage that the smoke does to cells, how a cancer develops, and so on. Most of the knowledge that we “know” is in fact simply a mental bookmark or reference point to an expert’s knowledge. Sloman discusses that “knowing that experts understand a phenomenon gives individuals the sense that they understand it better themselves, but only if they believe they have access to the experts’ explanation ... [People] take cognitive credit for other people’s knowledge. People fail to draw a sharp boundary between the knowledge they possess and the knowledge to which they have access in their community”.³⁴ One’s trusting of an expert in this case serves as a reference point that he or she uses to make future decisions.

Some of these cues play a greater role in vote choice than others. For example, there is evidence that topics that are even considered as “non-attitudes” can be influenced greatly by partisan cues. In February 1995, Richard Morin revisited the classic experiment of the “1975 Public Affair Act” (a fictional piece of legislation in order to test non-attitudes) by adding the partisan cues that either “President Clinton” or “Republicans” supported repealing the act. Essentially, “once activated, partisanship clearly guided how respondents answered... When told it was President Clinton’s idea, self-

³⁴ Sloman, Steven A., and Nathaniel Rabb. "Your Understanding Is My Understanding." *Psychological Science* 27.11 (2016): 1451-460. Web.

identified Democrats tended to favor repealing the Public Affairs Act, whereas Republicans were more likely to oppose its repeal. But if they heard it was a proposal by the GOP in Congress, Republicans overwhelmingly favored getting rid of it, whereas Democrats opposed the idea by a margin of more than three to one.... Psychologically, the gist of the question had become: *If they're for it, I'm against it*". As suspected, when given the partisan cue, the responses of "Don't Know" was much smaller than when those cues were not given."³⁵ A similar experiment done by Rahn notes that when fictional candidates emphasized past party heroes, such as Franklin Delano Roosevelt and Ronald Reagan, voters preferred to utilize heuristic-based processing, simply "using the label rather than policy attributes in drawing inferences".³⁶ Strikingly, even when there was incongruence between the party and the issue, voters relied this heuristic based thinking.

Table 2.2. Responses to Repealing 1975 Public Affairs Act by Question Wording

	Question wording		
	<i>Ambiguous</i>	<i>Clinton's idea</i>	<i>Republicans' idea</i>
Agree	24%	25%	22%
Disagree	19	30	27
Don't know	57	45	51
Total	100	100	100
(N =)	(459)	(223)	(220)

Source: National survey for the *Washington Post* conducted by ICR Survey Research of Media, Pennsylvania, February 1995.

Note: Data shown are weighted for household size and population demographics. Not-applicable and refusal responses were excluded from the analysis.

Similar research by Grant and Rudolph shows, that when people are affiliated with, or simply like, a certain group, they believe that restrictions should not be placed on that group's spending. However, when there is no affiliation to a group, or there is dislike, regulations are

³⁵ Bishop, George F. 2005. *The Illusion of Public Opinion : Fact and Artifact in American Public Opinion Polls*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.

³⁶ Id at 32.

deemed acceptable. (Grant and Rudolph, 2003). Additional findings include that "... considerations of free speech were weighted more heavily in citizens' decisional calculus than concerns about group's undue influence. After evaluating a disliked group, however, beliefs about groups' rights were sacrificed in concerns about groups' influence" (465). This is intriguing as "bias in political judgements [are] apparently not [only] confined to narrow and emotional issues... bias surfaces even in decisions ... like whether to reform the campaign finance system".³⁷

In the absence of partisan cues and the ability to evaluate retrospectively, Lupia found that voters were still able to use information shortcuts effectively to make judgements about five proposed policies towards auto-insurance reform in 1988. In campaigning, the insurance industry spent roughly \$65 million on campaigning, compared to \$15 million by Trial Lawyers, and less than \$2 million by consumer advocates. Thus, the insurance industry had the greatest amount of exposure on urging voters. Lupia notes that "The relationship between these three groups (high knowledge with knowledge of insurance industry preference, low knowledge with knowledge of insurance industry preferences, and low knowledge without knowledge of insurance industry preferences) strongly supports the assertion that knowledge of the insurance industry's preference provided an effective shortcut for voters whose (encyclopedic) knowledge of proposition content was low".³⁸ Essentially, those who had the knowledge on which reforms the insurance industry was against (Proposition 103) seemed to overwhelmingly vote for it, even if they didn't have the full "encyclopedic knowledge" on what the Proposition

³⁷ Grant, J. Tobin, and Thomas J. Rudolph. "Value Conflict, Group Affect, and the Issue of Campaign Finance." *Am J Political Science* American Journal of Political Science 47.3 (2003): 453-69. Web.

³⁸ *Id.* at 31

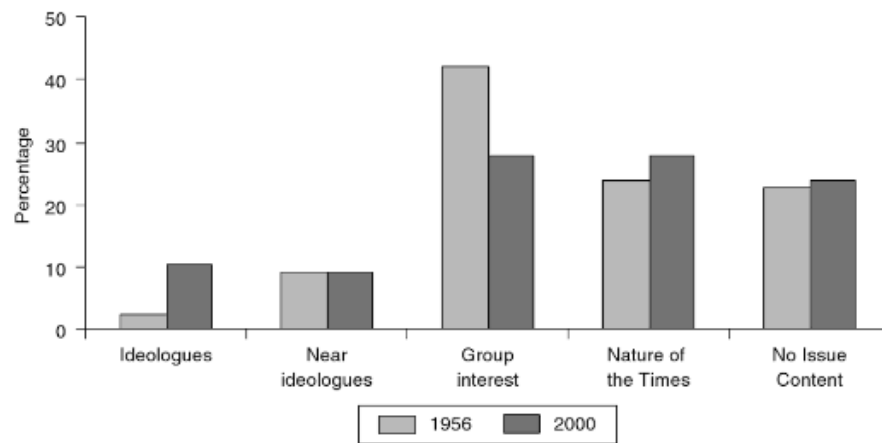
stood for. Voters once again based their decisions on the idea “*if they’re for it, I must be against it*”. Even in these conditions where voters do not have specific cues on how their party would vote, or how the policy has fared in the past, voters are still able to draw upon cues based upon associations of the policy.

While partisan cues appear to very clearly bolster support for policies and candidates when that information is disclosed, I wonder if ideology reacts the same way. Whether or not ideology in and of itself exists has been a debate amongst political scientists since the 1950s. Philip Converse’s work on political ideology demonstrated that citizens did not see the world through ideological lenses. To clarify, a political ideology can be defined as “an interrelated set of attitudes and values about the proper role of society”.³⁹ In Converse’s words, “The more impoverished [a citizen’s] understanding of the term [conservative or liberal] the less the term conveys. In the limiting case- if he does not know at all what the term means- it conveys no information at all”. In his study, Converse characterized voters into five groups. As seen below, ideologues and near-ideologues only made up 11.5% of the electorate. In another study, Converse noted that “nearly 40 percent of the respondents either did not recognize these terms or were unable to attach any meaning to these terms”.⁴⁰

³⁹ Tedin, Kent “Political Ideology and the Vote,” *Research in Micropolitics* 2 (1987):65

⁴⁰ Clawson, Rosalee A., and Zoe M. Oxley. *Public Opinion: Democratic Ideals, Democratic Practice*. Washington, D.C.: CQ, 2017. Print.

Figure 5-1 Levels of Conceptualization among the American Public, 1956 and 2000



Sources: Adapted from Table I of Philip E. Converse, "The Nature of Belief Systems in Mass Publics," in *Ideology and Discontent*, ed. David E. Apter (New York: Free Press, 1964), 218, and Table 10.1 of Michael S. Lewis-Beck, Helmut Norpoth, William G. Jacoby, and Herbert F. Weisberg, *The American Voter Revisited* (Ann Arbor, Mich.: University of Michigan Press, 2008), 279.

However, Converse's conclusions are not necessarily completely true today. For one, Converse's survey methodology may not have been specific enough to measure the raw complexity of political thinking. An ethnographic or an interview approach may possibly have provided a better approach at gauging how respondents derived their decisions, as these would allow respondents to identify ideologically in their own words. Finally, "2012 saw the lowest proportion of the electorate [23%] indicating that they were not able to identify their ideology since the ANES began asking this question". This suggests that although voters in the 1950s may not have viewed the world through ideological lenses, ideology certainly has a greater impact on voting decisions today.

A widely accepted model of voting suggests that a voter is made by ones strength of partisanship along with the impact of "short term forces", which can include a candidates image, the party's current image, and relevant issues. However, this traditional model does not

incorporate the potential for disclosure. This research leads me to the question: does disclosure impact a voter's decision? And if it does, does ideology still play a major role?

Methodology

Thus, to test the effects of extremely clear disclosure on the vote process, I designed a survey-experiment. Respondents were recruited via two lists of registered voters, and screened for voter registration and the ability to see and listen to videos on their device. Participants were then asked a series of political knowledge questions, to both prime them into thinking about their own political attitudes and to gauge their general political knowledge. After, participants watched a short, fictional political commercial about a candidate named James Scott, who was running for city council. They were then given a possibility of one of three treatments, the information that the ad that they just watched was paid for by an organization known as "Americans for Liberal Action", "Americans for Conservative Action", or "Americans for Action". Participants were asked to describe what they thought of the candidate, how competent he was, how trustworthy he was, and how they would rate him on a feeling thermometer from 0-100. Participants were then asked again who paid for the ad, and would be reminded who the sponsor was if they were wrong. Finally, participants were asked how likely they would be to vote for James Scott and some basic demographic questions.

Respondents were randomly selected from two email lists, one of voters in Columbus, Ohio, and one of voters in Orange County, CA. Respondents were then contacted using Qualtrics, and requested to take part in a general study about voter behavior. After the initial invite, respondents who had not completed the survey were issued another reminder email a

week after the initial invite. The survey fielded from January 27, 2017 to February 8, 2017. 100 respondents participated from the Columbus sample, while 247 respondents participated from the Orange County sample, yielding a total n of 347 complete responses.

Participants were first asked whether they were registered to vote; anyone who answered no to this was screened out. While this may seem odd, the idea behind the experiment was to see the impact of disclosure upon voters, so if someone had not even registered to vote, it is unlikely that he or she would be participating at all within the political process. Participants were then screened for whether they could watch and listen to an embedded video, as this would-be part of the treatment process later. Those who were unable to see or hear the video were also terminated.

Participants were then asked various topical political questions. The purpose of asking theses was twofold. The first was so that participants would be primed into thinking about political issues, and so that at some level, they would be thinking about their personal political attitudes. The second was to see if there was a relationship between a participants "knowledge score" and his or her reaction to the treatment imposed. I expected to see high levels of political knowledge, as it is likely that this would be a politically motivated sample, or that one would already have a moderate to high interest in politics if they were taking the survey.

Table 1: Political Knowledge Text			
<u>Qualtrics</u> <u>Question ID#</u>	<u>Question Text</u>	<u>Correct Answer</u>	<u>N</u> <u>correct</u>
7	Who is the current Speaker of the House?	Paul Ryan	302
9	According to the Constitution, how many Senators are allocated to each state?	2	309
11	Which political party -- the Democratic or Republican -- currently has the most members in the U.S. House of Representatives?	Republican	338
13	Which of these parties in the United States is typically considered to be more Conservative?	Republican	341
15	How many years are in a US Senator's term?	6	206

The participant was then asked to watch a 45 second fictional political commercial. The Columbus and the Orange County commercials were extremely similar. The only key difference that existed between them was that the Columbus commercial made the references that James Scott was running for *Columbus* City Council, while the Orange County commercial simply referenced Scott was running for City Council. Additionally, as the commercial was shot in Columbus, there were potential cues that Columbus based participants could pick up on.

Participants were then given the respective treatment that Qualtrics had randomly assigned them in the beginning of the survey. Qualtrics randomly and equally placed participants in three different groups, one being the 'liberal' treatment, one being the 'conservative' treatment, and one being a 'control'.

Table 2: Treatment Text			
<u>Qualtrics</u> <u>Question ID#</u>	<u>Treatment</u>	<u>n</u>	<u>Text</u>
50	Conservative	115	The advertisement you just saw was paid for by an organization known as Americans for Conservative Action.
51	Liberal	113	The advertisement you just saw was paid for by an organization known as Americans for Liberal Action.
52	Control	119	The advertisement you just saw was paid for by an organization known as Americans for Action.

They were then asked to describe what they thought of the candidate in an open-ended question, along with how competent or trustworthy they thought the candidate was. They were also asked to rate the candidate on a scale from 0-100. At that point, the participant would be reminded once again who sponsored the advertisement. This was done to specifically emphasize the impact that disclosure would have. Finally, the participant was asked how they would vote for Scott.

Table 3: Dependent Variables			
<u>Qualtrics Question ID#</u>	<u>Question Text</u>	<u>Scale Points</u>	<u>Means</u>
20	How competent did you think that James Scott was for the position he was running for?	1. Extremely competent 2. Fairly competent 3. Not very competent 4. Not at all competent	2.4315476
21	How trustworthy did you feel that James Scott was?	1. Extremely trustworthy 2. Fairly trustworthy 3. Not very trustworthy 4. Not at all trustworthy	2.4277286
62	Imagine a thermometer from 0 to 100. Ratings between 50° and 100° mean that you feel favorable and warm toward the person. Ratings between 0° and 50° mean that you don't feel favorable toward the person and that you don't care too much for them. You would rate the person at the 50° mark if you don't feel particularly warm or cold toward them. How would you rate James Scott?	0-100	52.1721068
22	Given what you know, if you had to vote for city council right now, how likely would you be to vote for James Scott?	1. Extremely likely 2. Fairly likely 3. Slightly likely 4. Neither likely nor unlikely 5. Slightly unlikely 6. Fairly unlikely 7. Extremely unlikely	4.1700288

Finally, participants were asked specific demographic questions. This included their gender, party id, political ideology, self-gauged political interest, news media consumption,

racial or ethnic background, and age. Since the study ran in big cities in California and Ohio, and was conducted over the internet, I expected that the sample would lean heavily Democratic and Liberal.

Table 5: Sample Ideology (Threeway)		
Ideology	n	Percent
Liberal (1-3)	212	61.10%
Moderate (4, No Answer)	46	13.30%
Conservative (5-7)	89	25.60%

Table 6: Sample Ideology (Twoway)		
Ideology	n	Percent
Liberal (1-3)	212	70.43%
Conservative (5-7)	89	29.57%

Table 7: Sample Partisanship		
Partisanship	n	Percent
Strong Democrat	121	35.28%
Not very strong Democrat	52	15.16%
Lean Democrat	81	23.62%
Lean Republican	31	9.04%
Not very strong Republican	28	8.16%
Strong Republican	30	8.75%

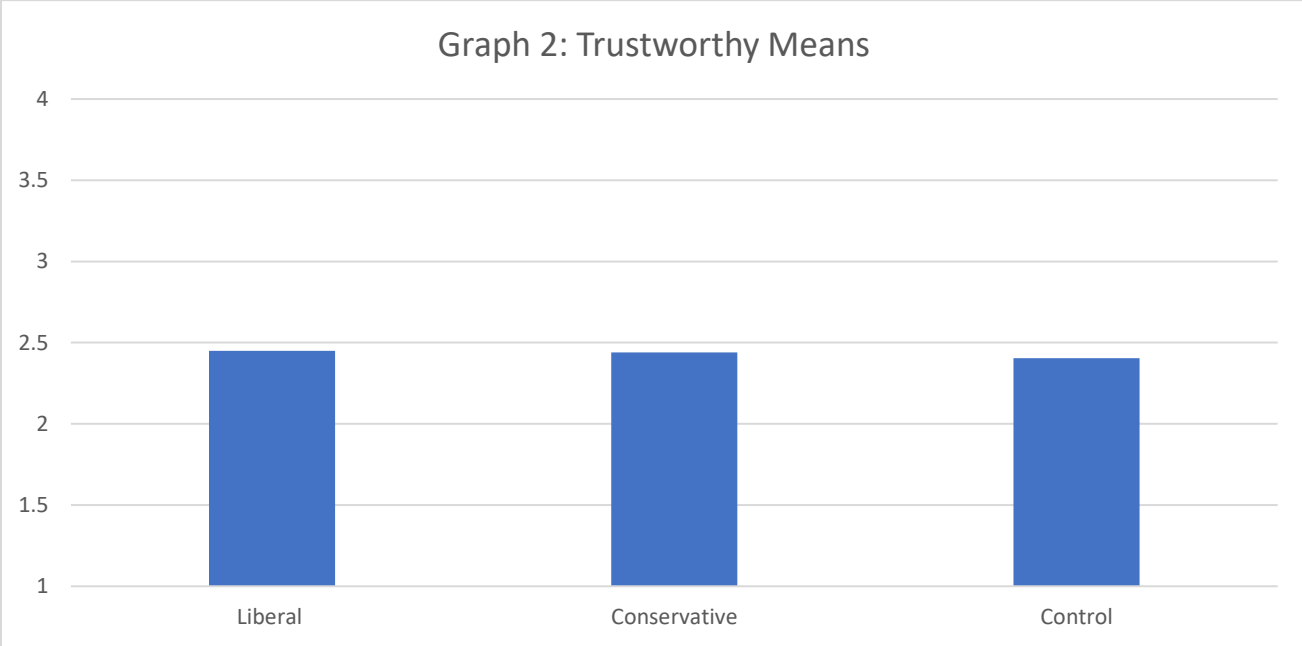
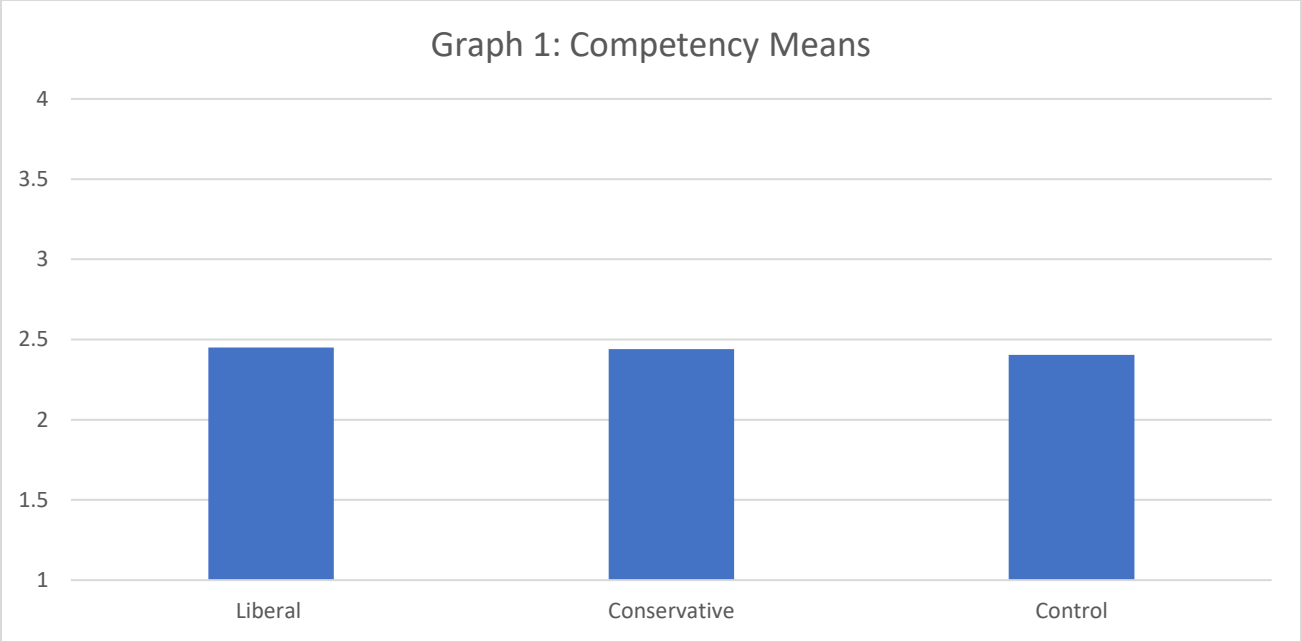
Table 8: Sample Partisanship (Collapsed)		
Partisanship	n	Percent
Democrat	175	50.58%
Independent	113	32.66%
Republican	58	16.76%

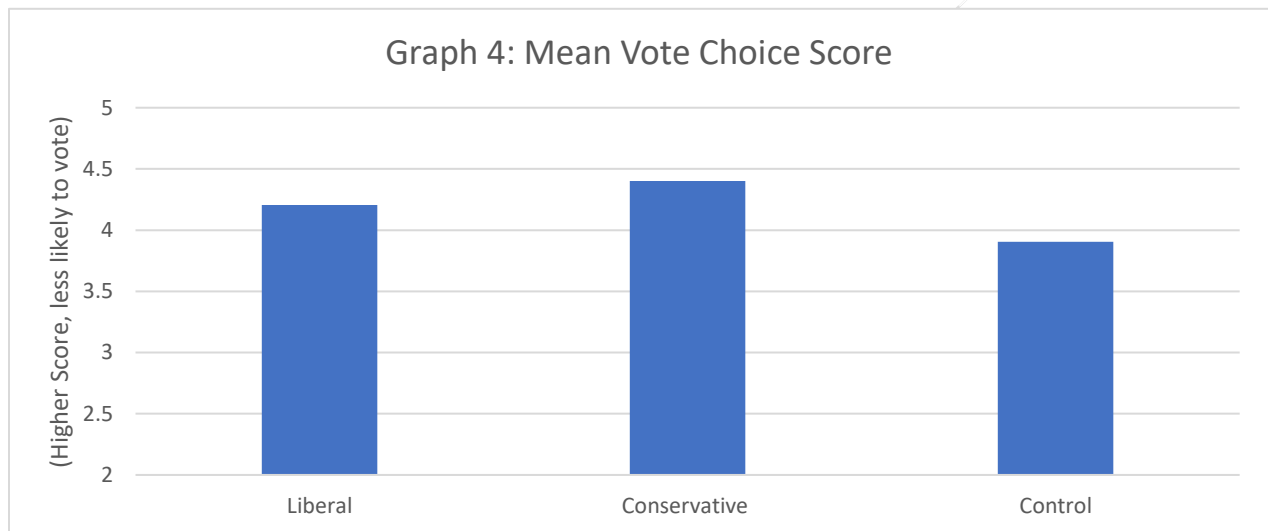
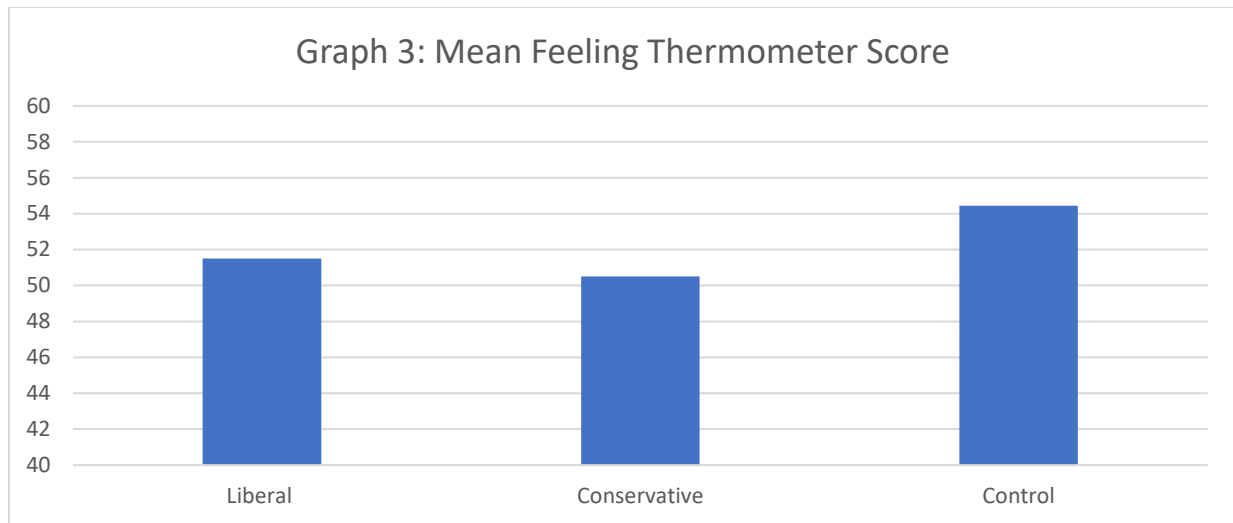
Key Findings

In order to test whether or not disclosure had an impact on voter's evaluative judgement, I was specifically interested in observing participants' party identification and political ideology compared to their respective evaluative criteria. These criteria included how competent and trustworthy the candidate was, a feeling thermometer, and vote choice.

In order to do that, I ran a one-way analysis of variance with condition as an independent variable and one of these evaluative criteria as my dependent variable. Out of the three experimental treatments, adding the liberal cue resulted in a higher score on both the competency and trustworthiness scales. However, the control treatment received a higher score upon the feeling thermometer and higher likelihood of vote choice. Only vote-choice showed any statistical significance.

Table 9: One Way ANOVA Test Results						
		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
20. How competent did you think that James Scott was for the position he was running for?	Between Groups	0.129	2	0.064	0.149	0.862
	Within Groups	144.297	333	0.433		
	Total	144.426	335			
21. How trustworthy did you think that James Scott was for the position he was running for?	Between Groups	0.189	2	0.094	0.259	0.772
	Within Groups	122.790	336	0.365		
	Total	122.979	338			
62. Feeling Thermometer	Between Groups	994.385	2	497.193	1.335	0.265
	Within Groups	124401.633	334	372.460		
	Total	125396.018	336			
22. Vote Choice	Between Groups	17.591	2	8.795	4.603	0.011
	Within Groups	657.377	344	1.911		
	Total	674.968	346			

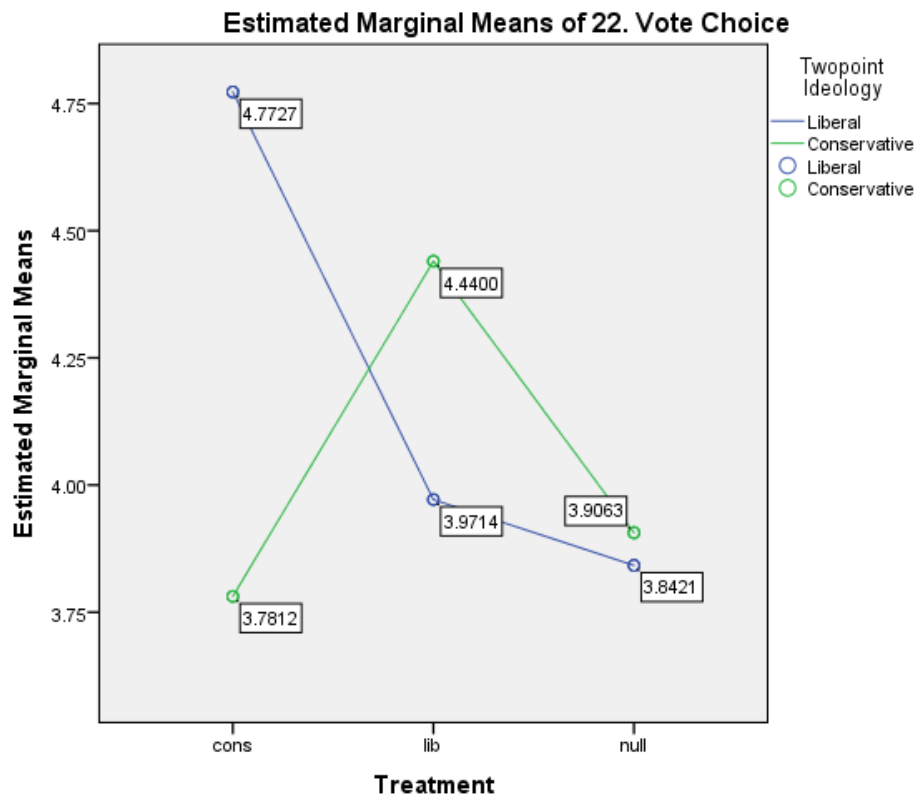
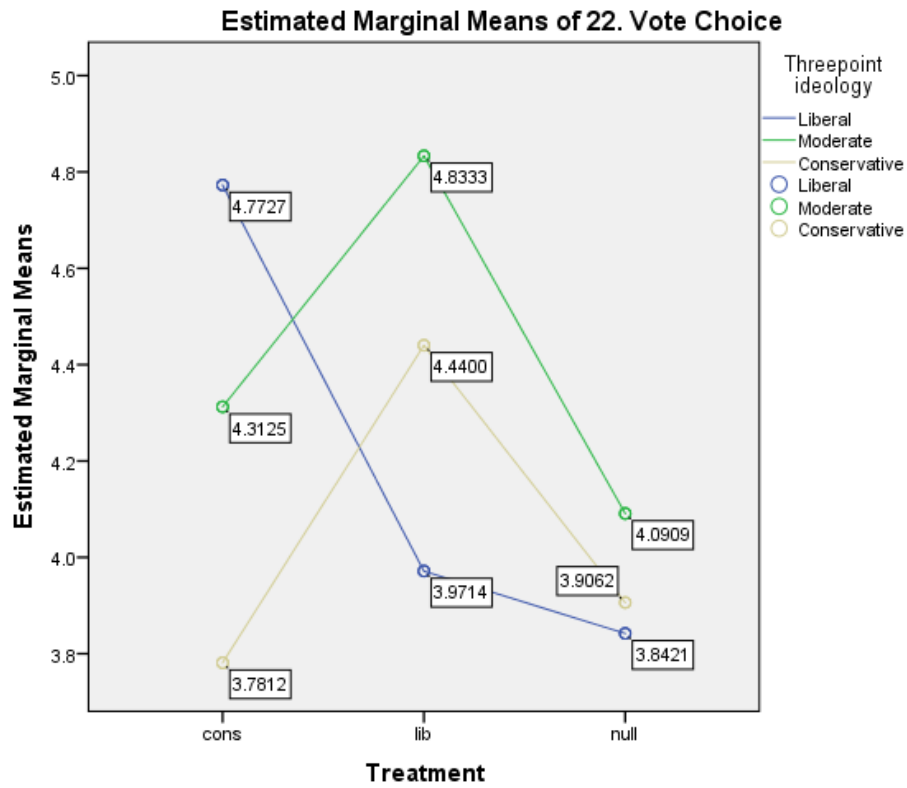




This led me to conduct a two-way analysis of variance amongst certain variables. Specifically, I was curious to see how a participant's ideology affected their vote choice. The two-way ANOVA tests showed that there was a statistically significant interaction between a collapsed three-point ideology scale and vote choice. This significance increased ($p=.02$) when simply looking at a "hard" two-point scale (those who answered 1-3 or 5-7 on the ideology scale). All groups showed a high vote likelihood when given the control treatment (the non-ideological cue). However, liberals showed an even greater vote likelihood (albeit slight) for voting for the candidate associated with the non-ideological cue than the one with a liberal cue.

Table 10: Two-way ANOVA Test Results

Dependent Variable:					
Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	52.106 ^a	8	6.513	3.524	0.001
Intercept	4067.790	1	4067.790	2200.983	0.000
splitsample	8.431	2	4.215	2.281	0.104
IdeologyX3	4.029	2	2.015	1.090	0.337
splitsample * IdeologyX3	29.006	4	7.252	3.924	0.004
Error	622.833	337	1.848		
Total	6693.000	346			
Corrected Total	674.939	345			
a. R Squared = .077 (Adjusted R Squared = .055)					



Discussion

Since before even the American revolution, campaign finance reform has been a controversial topic. Despite the issue sometimes being framed as a modern day liberal crusade, the polarized American public appears to show a strong consensus on the fact that there is too much money in politics today. Yet since *Citizens United*, the avenues that many reformers have pursued have been either impractical (such as passing an Amendment to the Constitution) or in jeopardy of being ruled unconstitutional (such as strict state level systems of matching funds). However, the one avenue that the Supreme Court left the door open for was for Congress to passing strong disclosure laws.

To assess the impact that disclosure has upon voters, I ran a survey-experiment of registered voters in Irvine, CA and Columbus, OH. I find that disclosure does have an immediate impact upon the voting intentions of respondents. Liberals are much more likely to vote for a candidate when it is revealed that a commercial is paid for by a nondescript liberal organization, compared to when the commercial is paid for by a conservative organization. Similarly, conservatives showed the opposite results. It should be noted that vote-choice was the only statistically significant result. Broadly speaking, it may be that the second reminder of who paid for the advertisement was the key way that disclosure could have an impact; that for disclosure to truly remind a voter of his or her own ideological interest, it must be repeated multiple times. This would suggest that the subsequent reminder is what is key in making an impact in swaying voters.

What was surprising was the results of the control, non-ideological organization (“Americans for Action”). Overall, the control organization fared higher upon vote-likelihood

compared to the other organizations. Even more interestingly, the control group actually scored slightly higher on vote likelihood for liberals than the liberal interest group. What is likely happening here goes back to the idea of projection. For example, when conservatives who received the control treatment heard that James Scott would “bring back accountability to public schools”, they would project their own interpretation of what that could mean (increased school choice, funding charter schools, etc.). Similarly, when liberals heard that same phrase, they would project their own interpretation of what policy proposals this would translate to (strengthening teachers unions, increasing teachers salaries, etc.)

While this study does shed light upon the impacts of disclosure, I would be interested in changing the methodology in the future. For one, developing a representative sample was an issue. Of the 347 respondents, over 61% identified themselves as a liberal. It would be important to test this study in multiple other areas where there is a greater share of conservatives, and see if the findings differ. Furthermore, it is likely that the sample was highly motivated. Requests to take the survey were sent out to over 40,000 email records, yet only 347 participants provided usable data. Thus, it is likely that this sample was one that was highly motivated and one that had prior political knowledge and interest. It would be interesting to replicate this study, but to either add a monetary incentive to boost sample response, or to recruit via phone or an Interactive Voice Response. It could be possible to receive a more representative sample by recruiting via more ‘traditional’ methods, which may appeal to older people. By developing a more representative sample, I may also be able to test the impact of disclosure upon “high information” vs “low information” voters, or amongst voters who have

voted in all 4 of the last 4 elections vs voters who have only voted in 2 out of the last 4 elections.

Additionally, it would be interesting to see if having no disclosure information makes a difference in vote choice and other evaluative criteria. This would allow us to see the difference in the actual impact of having the information compared to not having the information. Similarly, I would be interested in testing the validity of this experiment by comparing it to one in which disclosure was more “realistic”. In this “realistic” experiment, I would briefly have the disclosure information flash upon the screen in small print, similar to how political advertisements emulate disclosure now.

Overall, the policy implications from this study suggest that Congress should pass stronger disclosure laws. Although prior research suggests that voters can make “rational” vote choices simply based upon various cues, comprehensive and accessible disclosure only appears to strengthen these rational and informed vote choices. Making disclosure mandatory on the part of politicians, and more accessible for voters can only create a richer and more participatory democracy, similar to the one that Justice Kennedy envisioned in *Citizens United*.

Appendix

Survey Questionnaire

Thank you very much for participating in this survey. You will watch a short video and then answer a few questions about it. You will also be asked a few general questions about your political outlook.

The Ohio State University Consent to Participate in Research

Researcher: Farhad Choksy

This is a consent form for research participation. It contains important information about this study and what to expect if you decide to participate.

Your participation is voluntary.

Please consider the information carefully. Feel free to ask questions before making your decision whether or not to participate. If you decide to participate, you will be asked to sign this form and will receive a copy of the form.

Purpose: The purpose of this study is to explore how voters approach analyzing different kinds of political advertisements.

Procedures/Tasks: You will be asked to watch a 30-second political commercial. You will then be asked some questions concerning your thoughts about the commercial. You will also be asked some questions about your general political outlook.

Duration:

You may leave the study at any time. If you decide to stop participating in the study, there will be no penalty to you, and you will not lose any benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. Your decision will not affect your future relationship with The Ohio State University.

Risks and Benefits:

There are no direct benefits to you. There is a small chance that information transmitted over the Internet might be viewed by a third party. We will do everything we can to minimize this risk.

Confidentiality:

Efforts will be made to keep your study-related information confidential. However, there may be circumstances where this information must be released. For example, personal information regarding your participation in this study may be disclosed if required by state law. Also, your records may be reviewed by the following groups (as applicable to the research):

- Office for Human Research Protections or other federal, state, or international regulatory agencies;
- The Ohio State University Institutional Review Board or Office of Responsible Research Practices;

- The sponsor, if any, or agency (including the Food and Drug Administration for FDA-regulated research) supporting the study.

Participant Rights:

You may refuse to participate in this study without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you are a student or employee at Ohio State, your decision will not affect your grades or employment status.

If you choose to participate in the study, you may discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits. By signing this form, you do not give up any personal legal rights you may have as a participant in this study.

An Institutional Review Board responsible for human subjects research at The Ohio State University reviewed this research project and found it to be acceptable, according to applicable state and federal regulations and University policies designed to protect the rights and welfare of participants in research.

Contacts and Questions:

For questions, concerns, or complaints about the study, or you feel you have been harmed as a result of study participation, you may contact **Farhad Choksy** (choksy.2@osu.edu).

For questions about your rights as a participant in this study or to discuss other study-related concerns or complaints with someone who is not part of the research team, you may contact Ms. Sandra Meadows in the Office of Responsible Research Practices at 1-800-678-6251.

If you do not wish to participate in this study, please simply close this browser window. If you do wish to participate, please click on the “Continue” button below.

Q1 Are you registered to vote?

- ☐ Yes
☐ No

If No Is Selected, Then Skip To End of Survey

Q54 What is this video of?

- ☐ A dog sledding
- ☐ A person eating
- ☐ A stream of water
- ☐ I could see but not hear the video
- ☐ Don't know/ Didn't Play

If "A stream of water" is Not Selected, Then Skip to End of Survey
Randomly Sort Groups into "Liberal", "Conservative", and "Control" Treatments.

Q3 For this next part, you will be asked a series of questions about politics and current events. Each question will be shown for 15 seconds, before automatically moving on. Please select the answer that you think is true.

Q5 Who is the current Speaker of the House?

- ☐ John Boehner
- ☐ Paul Ryan
- ☐ Nancy Pelosi
- ☐ Dennis Hastert
- ☐ Newt Gingrich

Q7 According to the Constitution, how many Senators are allocated to each state?

- ☐ 1
- ☐ 2
- ☐ 3
- ☐ 4
- ☐ 5

Q9 Which political party -- the Democratic or Republican -- currently has the most members in the U.S. House of Representatives?

- ☐ Democratic
- ☐ Republican

Q11 Which of these parties in the United States is typically considered to be more Conservative?

- ☐ Democratic
- ☐ Republican

Q13 How many years are in a US Senator's term? **(Open Ended Text Box)**

Q15 Whose responsibility is it to determine if a law is constitutional or not?

- ☐ The Supreme Court
- ☐ The United States Congress
- ☐ President of the United States

Q16 You will now watch a 45 second political commercial of a fictional political candidate running for City Council.

Q74 Autoplay Campaign Commercial.

If "Conservative" treatment was selected before, show question 50.

If "Liberal" treatment was selected before, show question 51.

If "Control" treatment was selected before, show question 52.

Q50 The advertisement you just saw was paid for by an organization known as **Americans for Conservative Action**.

Q51 The advertisement you just saw was paid for by an organization known as **Americans for Liberal Action**.

Q52 The advertisement you just saw was paid for by an organization known as **Americans for Action**.

Q19 What was one thing you noticed about James Scott? **(Open Ended Text Box)**

Q20 How **competent** did you think that James Scott was for the position he was running for?

- ☐ Extremely competent
- ☐ Fairly competent
- ☐ Not very competent
- ☐ Not at all competent

Q21 How **trustworthy** did you feel that James Scott was?

- ☐ Extremely trustworthy
- ☐ Fairly trustworthy
- ☐ Not very trustworthy
- ☐ Not at all trustworthy

Q62 Imagine a thermometer from 0 to 100. Ratings between 50° and 100° mean that you feel favorable and warm toward the person. Ratings between 0° and 50° mean that you don't feel favorable toward the person and that you don't care too much for them. You would rate the person at the 50° mark if you don't feel particularly warm or cold toward them

How would you rate James Scott?

If "Conservative" treatment was selected before, show question 63.

Q63 What group sponsored the ad you just saw?

- ☐ Americans for Conservative Action
- ☐ United for a Better America
- ☐ Affirm Our Future
- ☐ Bring Back Free Markets
- ☐ Revive Liberty

If "Americans for Conservative Action" is selected for Q63, show question 68.

Else, show Q69.

Q68 You are correct! The ad was sponsored by **Americans for Conservative Action**.

Q69 The ad was sponsored by **Americans for Conservative Action**.

If "Liberal" treatment was selected before, show question 66.

Q66 What group sponsored the ad you just saw?

- ☐ Americans for Liberal Action
- ☐ United for a Better America
- ☐ Affirm Our Future
- ☐ Bring Back Free Markets
- ☐ Revive Liberty

If "Americans for Liberal Action" is selected for Q66, show question 70.

Else, show Q71.

Q70 You are correct! The ad was sponsored by **Americans for Liberal Action**.

Q71 The ad was sponsored by **Americans for Liberal Action**.

If “Control” treatment was selected before, show question 67.

Q67 What group sponsored the ad you just saw?

- ☐ Americans for Action
- ☐ United for a Better America
- ☐ Affirm Our Future
- ☐ Bring Back Free Markets
- ☐ Revive Liberty

If “Americans for Action” is selected for Q67, show question 72.

Else, show Q73.

Q72 You are correct! The ad was sponsored by **Americans for Action**.

Q73 The ad was sponsored by **Americans for Action**.

Q22 Given what you know, if you had to vote for city council right now, how likely would you be to vote for James Scott?

- ☐ Extremely likely
- ☐ Fairly likely
- ☐ Slightly likely
- ☐ Neither likely nor unlikely
- ☐ Slightly unlikely
- ☐ Fairly unlikely
- ☐ Extremely unlikely

Q23 The following questions are for statistical purposes.

Q24 What is your gender?

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female
- ☐ Transgender

Display This Question:

If What is your gender? Transgender Is Selected

Q25 Is there a specific gender identity that you use to describe yourself?

Q26 In politics today, do you consider yourself a Republican, Democrat, or independent?

- ☐ Democrat
- ☐ Republican
- ☐ Independent

Display This Question:

If In politics today, do you consider yourself a Republican, Democrat, or independent? Democrat Is Selected

Q27 Would you call yourself a strong Democrat or a not very strong Democrat?

- ☐ Strong Democrat
- ☐ not very strong Democrat

Display This Question:

If In politics today, do you consider yourself a Republican, Democrat, or independent? Republican Is Selected

Q28 Would you call yourself a strong Republican or a not very strong Republican?

- ☐ Strong Republican
- ☐ not very strong Republican

Display This Question:

If In politics today, do you consider yourself a Republican, Democrat, or independent? Independent Is Selected

Q29 As of today, do you lean more to the Republican Party or more to the Democratic Party

- ☐ Lean Republican
- ☐ Lean Democrat

Q30 Imagine an ideological scale that runs from 1 to 7 where 1 means very liberal and 7 means very conservative. Where would you place yourself on that scale?

Q49 How interested would you say you are in politics?

- ☐ Very interested
- ☐ Fairly interested
- ☐ Hardly interested
- ☐ Not at all interested

Q50 Typically, how often do you consume news media? News can refer to national, international, regional/local news and other topical events accessed via any platform (e.g., radio, TV, newspaper or online).

- ☐ More than 10 times a day
- ☐ Between 5-10 times a day
- ☐ Between 2-4 times a day
- ☐ Once a day
- ☐ 4-6 days a week
- ☐ 2-3 days a week
- ☐ Once a week
- ☐ Less often than once a week
- ☐ Less often than once a month
- ☐ Never

Q31 What do you consider to be your racial or ethnic background?

- ☐ White/Caucasian
- ☐ Black/African-American
- ☐ Hispanic/Latino
- ☐ Asian
- ☐ Bi-Racial/Multi- Racial
- ☐ Other (Please Specify) _____

Q32 How old are you?

- ☐ 18-25
- ☐ 26-34
- ☐ 35-54
- ☐ 55-64
- ☐ 65 or over

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